A MISCELLANY OF AMERICAN POETRY

1920

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PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

THIS volume is, as its name half implies, a miscellany of the most recent work of eleven American poets. These eleven form no particular group, illustrate no single influence, constitute no one "movement." Neither do they appear here (though they well might) as the chief exponents of certain phases and tendencies in contemporary American literature. Rather these eleven, representing the best and most divergent qualities in our native poetry, have joined in what is intended to be a biennial exhibition of independent personalities without emphasis on the part that any of them may have played or are playing in any movement.

For this reason, these poems are published without a preface, a program or an editor. To be exact, each poet has been his own editor. As such, he has selected and arranged his own contributions, but has had no authority either in the selection or rejection of those of his fellow-contributors.

The poems that follow are all new. They are new not only in the sense that they have not been previously issued by their authors in book form but, with the exception of seven poems, none of them has ever appeared in print. These seven exceptions are reprinted by permission from *The Century, Harper's, Scribner's Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* and *The Liberator.*

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CONRAD AIKEN

FIRST MOVEMENT FROM "THE PILGRIMAGE OF FESTUS."

I

And at last, having sacked in imagination many cities,
And seen the smoke of them spread fantastically along the sky;
Having set foot upon so many walls, fallen and blackened,
And heard the harsh lamentations of women,
And watched, without pity, the old men betraying their vileness,
Tear at their beards, and curse, and die;
Festus, coming alone to an eastern place
Of brown savannahs and wind-gnawed trees,
Climbed a rock that faced alone to the northward,
And sat, and clasped his knees.

There was before him the confluence of three rivers:
One from the north, one from the east, one from the west.
The one from the east was blue, the one from the west was green,
Black was the one from the north, and snow was on its breast.
The sound of their roaring came up in waves on the wind,

Into the tumultuous darkness of the south they went,
And Festus sat for a day and a night and watched them
And wondered what they meant.

"Look, Festus, how without regard for you and all your sorrow
The huge sun rises and crosses the sky,
And your ridiculous shadow circles about you
Shortening and lengthening silently!
What does it matter to the sun that your robe is scarlet?
That the sword at your hand is old and green!
Already the winds gnaw at you, as they have gnawed at these trees,
Careless of the many things you have done and seen."

The day ended, and the slow-wheeling magnificent constellations
Glided like lights of ships down the river of space,
And Festus was disturbed once more, and wished to speak,
And heavily raised his head at last in sorrow,
And turned towards the stars his face,
And said: "Look, Festus, how yet once more the immortals
Kindle their delicate lanterns and walk in the sky
While you on a lonely hill sit alone in sadness
And remember that you must die!
Look at the stars, Festus, treader of kingdoms,

You who carried the world like a bird in a cage,
You whose heart is a desert, gaunt with winter,
You whose sword in youth was a sevenfold lightning
Now worn and green with age!
Look! the immortals once more in the sky of your heart,
The immortals you scorned and forgot,
Walk in the dim blue gardens softly apart
To a music you taught them not! . . ."

Festus in starlight watched how the three great rivers
Bearing perpetual stars on their breasts, roared down
To gorges and chasms and desolate plains
And jungles of death, and labyrinthine cities
Swept to pale harmonies by suns and rains;
And thought of the thousands of nights and days like music

Woven by him, and the roses of love and death
Fallen in petals in the darkness of his heart;
And he sent among them a breath
And set them blowing and trembling again, on graves,
On the stones of streets, by door and path and wall,
Whirled in the air from the boughs of swinging trees,
To stream like stars on the wind and slowly fall
For the hands of children, the hair of women, the hearts of lovers,
The coffins waiting beneath the swinging trees,

And the myriad eyes that in his veins went to and fro
Seeking a dream forever and finding no ease.

"Listen, Festus! How the multitudes within you
Make a slow misty music of their own!
See how the walls of cities grow young again
With the spring upon them blown!
And you too, Festus! Treader in blood of kingdoms!
You walk in a moonlit wind of dream;
And you and the worlds about you are young once more
And blossom and tinkle and sing and gleam!"

Then Festus laughed, for he looked in his heart and saw
His worlds made young again,
And heard the sound of a many-peopled music,
And joyously into the world of himself set forward,
Forgetting the long black aftermath of pain.

II.

Listen, Festus! The music, as you lie sleeping,
Builds a world of hills and stars about you,
Cities of silver in forests of blue!
Bells are jingling, birds are saluting the daybreak,
The horns are spreading a meadow of gold for you.
Walls of stone and jewels arise in the music
Like exhalations laced with fire,

Children are playing and laughing beneath them,
The dew flashes on every spire! . . .

. . . Festus lies alone, and watches across the ceiling
Vague spokes of shadows wheeling,
Ghostly fantasias from the crowded world:
A woman passes in a vortex of light, a child passes,
Echoes and shadows and perfumes are faintly
whirled. . . .

Listen, Festus! The music is making trees,
The music is making rivers and towers! . . .
Music flows over the pools of sky in clouds
And scatters a tinkle of showers! . . .
Far off there, on a balcony of the wind,
The scarf of a maiden gleams,
In a rose-gold shaft of sun her soft hair glistens,
The clouds open, the tower is kindled and beams!
The waves of the river in blue and pearl-strewn
green
Flash down over rocks to the sea,
Walls of marble waver upon them and shatter,
And the mist of the willow-tree!

. . . Festus stands in the sunlight at the window,
And cruelly looks at roofs and rivers and skies,
And the trees, tossing their never-escaping waves
Of swirling leaves, and laughs, and shuts his eyes.
" How many times this music has deceived me!
How many times I stoop and cup my hand

Thinking to capture in it the sparkle of water,—
And quench, once more, my thirst with sand! "

But, as he closes his eyes, the music, circling,
Comes laughing about him and softly sings,
The trees whisper, the meadows tremble, and it seems to him
The music touches him with soft hands; the music, dancing about him,
Is a dance of immortal maidens in flaming eternal rings.

III

Festus, planting beans in the early morning,
Far in his heart, in a solitary plain,
Has a vision: the sun, like a golden monster
Heaving his crimson flanks from the streaming darkness,
No sooner seeks to rise than he is slain:
Out of a vast sarcophagus of cloud
Pours the black death of rain.

. . . Festus, holding his beans in the palm of his hand,
Stands astonished. . . . But this is least of all.
For, as the rain comes wavering over the fields,
Threshing the earth with silver in its fall,
Gathering into its numberless shafts of silver
What light there is, and leaving the sky a pall,

He sees, in the arrowy darkness,
In a flashing garment of rain,
A grey man like a pilgrim
Come slowly over the plain.
On his shoulder is a phantom burden—
He stoops, his white beard glistens;
For an instant he pauses, solitary in the rain,
And stands and listens.

And his eyes, for a moment, rest on those of Festus,
And Festus, troubled, lets fall the beans from his hand. . . .
" It is hard, Festus, that in this soul of yours,
This so colossal world of hills and oceans,
Forests and cities of men,
You keep us here forever in outer darkness,
Wretched, in wind and rain.
Shall we do nothing but feel upon our backs
The eternal lash of rain?
Shall we do nothing, day after day forever,
But plant these beans again? "

Festus guiltily looks at his beans a moment
Lying white and rain-washed at his feet:
It appears to him that the rain is a gorgeous music,
Sorrowful and slow and sweet;
Telling of hills that lie beyond this plain
And beyond the hills a sea;
With beautiful women going and coming forever

Through stone-bright streets, by walls and domes
of silver,
In a sound of music to towers of filigree. . . .

". . . It is hard, Festus, that in this soul of yours,
This world of clanging star and sun
With the horns of glory blowing from space to space
And the pæan of daybreak just begun,
You keep us here alone in a wind-worn plain
Stooping to plant these beans in the dark and the
rain. . . ."

Then Festus, lifting his eyes,
Watches the old man pass
Slowly among the shafts of the rain
Across the wind-lashed grass,
On his shoulder a phantom burden,
Till somehow he is gone:
Leaving a thinning ghost of rain
And Festus standing alone.

And Festus, resting his hands upon his hoe,
Watches the ranks of the purple rain ascending
To the cloud sarcophagus from which they came.
And the sun once more swims up like a golden mon-
ster,—
Heaving out of the streaming dark his hissing flanks
of flame.

IV

Festus, lighting his pipe against the sun,
Smokes in the furrows, regarding tenderly

His beans which, one by one,
Now shoulder through the dark earth sturdily.
This clear green neck, so exquisitely bent—
See how it struggles till the stone relent! . . .
A long warm wind flows by
Under a clanging sky;
Poplars, a myriad shape,
Incline and shiver, whirl and escape;
The clods grow dry;
And one by one, in delicate russets and greens,
Festus observes his beans
Exult from the humid earth, intently spring
Into the sunlight. . . . And it seems to him
That, if he listens, he will hear them sing. . . .
"Ah, Festus! Look how we,
Who in our caverns could not see,
But only over the blind walls blindly grope
With sensitive hands, having no hearts to hope,
Scarcely a dream to guide us,—
Look now how we
Press from the black soil arrogantly,
As with loud drums and trumpets bravely blown,
And a shrill laugh for him who dares deride us! . . .
Have you no cave, no sunlight, of your own? . . ."

. . . Festus, blowing the blue smoke from his pipe
Pauses a moment in his morning walk,
Patient and patronizing, like a father,
Who laughs in secret, hearing his children talk. . . .

"Superbly moral beans! Self-righteous ones!
One might suppose you were not beans, but suns!
Wet from the earth, two minutes old, and we
Presume to talk philosophy! . . .
Yet, none the less,—naïvely upright beans,—
I stand abashed before you! . . .
Is it with your own voices that you speak? . . .
It is strangely like a music I have heard—
Not, as one would expect of you, a squeak
Fainter than gossamer or cry of mote,
But the original, vast, reverberant Word!
Crashing of stars to dust, the crack of moons,
Combustion of suns . . . is it not these I hear? . . .
Or is it only the delicate slipping of sand-grains
From the grotesque hands you rear? . . ."

Festus, blowing a cloud of smoke before him,
Has a vision: the beans no longer seem
Pale pygmies at his feet but, dark and monstrous,
Green titans laboring in a colossal dream
With worlds upon their backs. Slowly they move.
The firmament strains and groans, a mountain falls,
They shake in ruins their everlasting walls . . .
Out of the dark they came,
To loosen torrents of water and rock and flame.

"But am I then," says Festus, "in a cavern
From which I dare not grow—
Into the universe which is myself? . . ."
. . . The poplar whirls in the wind; the beans, before him,

Climb the colossal and savage stairs of the sunlight,—
Heartless and dreamless, cruel, superbly slow.

V

The world grows dark, says Festus: evening falls,
And it is like the rising of grey walls.
Down the cold battlements of the west, the sun
Dolorously descends.
The wind mourns over the stark and shattered trees.
The deep day ends.

How like the sorrowings of my heart is this,
This soft ascension of despair!
The warm red memories of my heart go down
In waves of mist. . . . Let the stars find the air!

Here by the gateway let me lean and dream
Of the world that waits for me:
Through the pierced battlements of the grey clouds gleam
Delicate lights; the stars come out: I see
Beyond the plain, beyond the hills, a golden city
Dizzy with shaken light, and through the streets
Petals are flung, and a festival roars and passes . . .
Steeples rock with bells, a dull drum beats:
And now to a delicate music the dancers come,
Hurling up to the night a fountain of roses,

Whirling and laughing and burying under their
petals
The mournfully throbbing and stubborn drum. . . .

O dancers! dancers of silver! dancers of rose! . . .
Twinkling dancers who starlike tread that air! . . .
Lighter than waves you laugh against those walls;
How like the secret dreams of my heart you are
That dance once more as the cold of evening falls.

. . . And now an emperor comes! and now an
empress!
In a golden chariot drawn by five white stallions . . .
And now the steel-blue spears wave thick as rain
Of battalions and battalions!
. . . Am I an emperor? Is my word the law? . . .
And now the gods of brass and silver pass
Swaying and flashing, shaking their chaplets of roses,
Cruel, gigantic! And an elephant with torches,
Bearing an Egyptian god in a case of glass! . . .

Listen: a horn! . . . a violin! . . .
Weaving together an air so golden thin
It cuts the heart in two.
A girl leans out in the roar above the torches,
Her hair is dark, she flings a camellia flower:
Strange girl, I cry to you! . . .

Softer the horn sounds, fainter the violin,
The street is quiet. She draws the shutters in,
Her shadow silently whirls away.

Now that the streets grow dark and cold and empty,
Who will stay,—who will stay
To watch the grey soft-footed priests go by,
Lifting their white thin faces to the sky? . . .
Or who will stay to watch one coffin pass,
Under few stars, amid stale litter of petals,
While one man rides behind it on ass,—
Looking neither to left or right
But staring before him into the eternal night? . . .

The city dwindles . . . the clouds go crumbling
down . . .
The wind throbs harplike through old trees,
Dark is the plain, and ancient; and to Festus,
Leaning upon the ramparts of his world,
The thought comes that to-night his world will freeze.

VI

And observing from old ramparts cold with time
How the hunted stars together choiring climb
From cloud to cloud, like pilgrims,
Dreamily, slowly ascending the long blue stairs of
fate,—
Patient and pale, like those who, unresisting,
Go forth to death and close their eyes and wait,—

Festus dreams: he sees himself alone
Immense and dark on a pinnacle of the world,
Lying in starlight, hugely carved in stone.
Carved of rock is the pillow beneath his head,

Hewed in the black star-granite is his bed,
Solitary and vast, his upturned face
Stares at the cloudless horror of space;
While sorrowfully about the bases of his mountain,
The pine-shaggy headlands, vapor-furled,
He hears the desolate waves of death and time
Sadly withdrawn and once more sadly hurled.

. . . Ah! Festus, is this you—
This ancient crumbling basalt that in the moonlight
Feebly glistens with dew?
Is this indeed you, Festus,—
This unresisting stone
On which old leaves are blown? . . .

Yet not alone is Festus: in the blue vagueness there,
Close to the cold dew-drenched sarcophagus,
Crouched on the topmost stair,
A flute-player pale in the starlight blows his quavering flute
While Festus dreams above him and is mute.
Sharp and quick are the notes, brief and piercing,
They whirl and fly in the dark like birds,
Discordant and strange they rise in the eternal silence
Like a madman's dishevelled laughter and words.
Over the black sarcophagus they are blown—
Ah, Festus, do they not trouble your ears of stone?
Through starlit granite do they not dart
To pierce your stone-cold heart?

Do they disturb the rest
Of the stone hands on your breast? . . .

But Festus does not stir
In the darkness of his sepulchre,—
A dream possesses him.
He hears, far down, the struggling crash of waves
By the bases of his mountain, glutting the muffled caves;
He hears the boulders falling to the grey torrents of the sea;
Wind flows over him mournfully,
Mists of the waves about him rise, the vermilion stars grow dim. . . .
And lightly between the hands of the flute-player
Whirl forth shy birds of dream,
They twinkle above the sepulchre,
Their wings in the starlight gleam. . . .
And now soft fire descends from their wings,
And Festus' dream glares red:
Cloud-palaces and kingdoms dark
And multitudinous cities of rose
Within his dream are spread. . . .
(The spears of your armies, Festus, on this plain,
Are as the glimmering darkness of the rain! . . .
Listen! They call you emperor! . . .
And a crown is on your head!)

Festus, never stirring at all,
Lying forever aloft and alone in the starlight,

Sadly replies from the carven stone at last:
"Who are you, now, you strange flute-player,
Who, blowing your birds above me here in the silence,
Dare to disturb my rest? . . .
Do you think, with dreams like these,
To tempt me down, or drown me in these seas?
Ah! it is the sevenfold lightning alone
Will wake this heart of stone. . . ."

Then, in the shadow of the sepulchre,
The flute-player, growing old,
Blows one weak note from his broken flute;
And the lightning, sevenfold,
Smoking, clangs from a star, and splits
The eternal rock apart:
And into the sea the mountain falls,
The great waves laugh, and among them falls
Hissing and faint, far down, soon lost,
The ember of a heart. . . .

. . . And Festus, leaning gravely above the ramparts,
Watching a blood-red star go down the sky,
Stands astonished. Was this indeed a dream?
Summits of snow await him far in the starlight:
Cities, beyond the snow-peaks, stir and gleam.

ROBERT FROST

PLOWMEN

I HEAR men say to plow the snow.
They cannot mean to plant it though—
Unless in bitterness, to mock
At having cultivated rock.

GOOD-BYE AND KEEP COLD

This saying good-bye on the verge of the dark
And cold to an orchard so young in the bark,
Reminds me of all that can happen to harm
An orchard away at the end of the farm
All winter cut off by a hill from the house.
I don't want it girdled by rabbit and mouse,
I don't want it dreamily nibbled for browse
By deer, and I don't want it budded by grouse.
(If certain it wouldn't be idle to call,
I'd summon grouse, rabbit and deer to the wall
And warn them away with a stick for a gun.)
I don't want it stirred by the heat of the sun.
(We made it secure against being, I hope,
By setting it out on a northerly slope.)
No orchard's the worse for the wintriest storm,
But one thing about it, it mustn't get warm.
"How often already you've had to be told
Keep cold, young orchard. Good-bye and keep
cold.
Dread fifty above more than fifty below."
I have to be gone for a season or so;
My business awhile is with different trees,
Less carefully nurtured, less fruitful than these
And such as is done to their wood with an ax—
Maples and birches and tamaracks.
I wish I could promise to lie in the night

And share in an orchard's arboreal plight,
When slowly (and nobody comes with a light!)
Its heart sinks lower under the sod;
But something has to be left to God.

THE RUNAWAY

ONCE when the snow of the year was beginning to fall,
We stopped by a mountain pasture to say " Whose colt? "
A little Morgan had one forefoot on the wall,
The other curled at his breast. He dipped his head
And snorted to us. And then he had to bolt.
We heard the miniature thunder where he fled
And we saw him or thought we saw him dim and grey,
Like a shadow against the curtain of falling flakes.
" I think the little fellow's afraid of the snow.
He isn't winter-broken. It isn't play
With the little fellow at all. He's running away.
I doubt if even his mother could tell him, ' Sakes,
It's only weather.' He'd think she didn't know.
Where is his mother? He can't be out alone."
And now he comes again with a clatter of stone
And mounts the wall again with whited eyes
And all his tail that isn't hair up straight.
He shudders his coat as if to throw off flies.
" Whoever it is that leaves him out so late,
When other creatures have gone to stall and bin,
Ought to be told to come and take him in."

THE PARLOR JOKE

You won't hear unless I tell you
How the few to turn a penny
Built complete a modern city
Where there shouldn't have been any,
And then conspired to fill it
With the miserable many.

They drew on Ellis Island.
They had but to raise a hand
To let the living deluge
On the basin of the land.
They did it just like nothing
In smiling self-command.

If you asked them *their* opinion,
They declared the job as good
As when, to fill the sluices,
They turned the river flood;
Only then they dealt with water
And now with human blood.

Then the few withdrew in order
To their villas on the hill,
Where they watched from easy couches
The uneasy city fill.
" If it *isn't* good," they ventured,
" At least it isn't ill."

But with child and wife to think of,
They weren't taking any chance.
So they fortified their windows
With a screen of potted plants,
And armed themselves from somewhere
With a manner and a glance.

You know how a bog of sphagnum
Beginning with a scum
Will climb the side of a mountain,
So the poor began to come,
Climbing the hillside suburb
From the alley and the slum.

As their tenements crept nearer,
It pleased the rich to assume,
In humorous self-pity,
The mockery of gloom
Because the poor insisted
On wanting all the room.

And there it might have ended
In a feeble parlor joke,
Where a gentle retribution
Overtook the gentlefolk;
But that some beheld a vision:
Out of stench and steam and smoke,

Out of vapor of sweat and breathing,
They saw materialize
Above the darkened city
Where the murmur never dies,
A shape that had to cower
Not to knock against the skies.

They could see it through a curtain,
They could see it through a wall,
A lambent swaying presence
In wind and rain and all,
With its arms abroad in heaven
Like a scarecrow in a shawl.

There were some who thought they heard it
When it seemed to try to talk
But missed articulation
With a little hollow squawk,
Up indistinct in the zenith,
Like the note of the evening hawk.

Of things about the future
Its hollow chest was full,
Something about rebellion
And blood a dye for wool,
And how you may pull the world down
If you know the prop to pull.

What to say to the wisdom
That could tempt a nation's fate
By invoking such a spirit
To reduce the labor-rate!
Some people don't mind trouble
If it's trouble up-to-date.

FRAGMENTARY BLUE

Why make so much of fragmentary blue
In here and there a bird or butterfly
Or flower or wearing-stone or open eye,
When heaven presents in sheets the solid hue?

Since earth is earth, perhaps, not heaven (as yet)—
Though some savants make earth include the sky;
And blue so far above us comes so high
It only gives our wish for blue a whet.

THE LOCKLESS DOOR

It went many years,
But at last came a knock,
And I thought of the door
With no lock to lock.

I blew out the light,
I tiptoed the floor,
And raised both hands
In prayer to the door.

But the knock came again.
My window was wide;
I climbed on the sill
And descended outside.

Back over the sill
I bade a "Come in"
To whoever the knock
At the door may have been.

So, at a knock,
I emptied my cage
To hide in the world
And alter with age.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

John Gould Fletcher

AT SUNRISE

A WAVE hung over the city like an enormous cloud
Crested with smoky foam, and menaced him with death;
But he did not fear, for he had been blown out upon the sky
Like a tired swallow travelling to its nest against the eaves;
And through the great green wave, astonished, resolute,
He plunged. . . .

The light went out and there was nothing left
But the shouting fall of water, the whirl and drift of spray.
Then he awoke and saw
That the waters beat straight down,
Till the houses of the city were all broken, washed away,
And there arose
Out of the boiling eddies no more men, but gods.

Gods with white laughter crowned arose and fought and sang,
Naked as time, through the blinding drift that beat about their knees;
They pelted each other with snowballs torn from a comet's tail,

They screamed and shook with laughter, they hugged
and danced and sang,
And all around the bare horizon rang
With the glory that no future could assail.

Yet all the while he lay, still as death, still as death;
Still as white waters lapping softly under a lagging
moon:
A tired swallow blown to his nest against the eaves,
He lay and listened secretly, and still the gusty
breath
Of thunderous laughter crashed about the cloudless
sky till noon.

NOON

THE moon in her pallid last quarter falls west
through the burning blue sky,
Which, filled with pearl-coloured clouds charging,
blown out by the wind from the west,
Is galloping fast to the mountains that rear up their
cloudy dark brows:
Below is the leopard-flecked ocean, shadow-spotted,
a great space where foam
Is tossed over the purple-brown shallows straight on
to the rim of the sands
Stretching out in brown ribbed desolation, naked and
smooth and unchanged
As before any human came hither to spy out the
peaks and the vales.
Valley on valley, peak after peak, flecked ever with
flying white cloud;
And, amid them, the waste of the uplands where the
winds race forever to shore;
And the moon in her pallid last quarter falling west
through the burning blue sky,—
Noon in the druids' grey circle of stones and happi-
ness clutched in my heart.

THE STONE PLACE

I COME and I return to a place of stone;
Where there is nothing left but granite and silence,
And on the upland, spotted with heather, stand
Weatherworn blocks that time has not taken away.
I come to where rain and dust are quiet at last;
Here I set forth at evening long ago,
And as of old the bumble-bee goes by,
The crickets are all shrilling in the grass,
The dry blades lightly press the naked stone.

Last night the wind
Shook the great beech-trees, ramped about the house,
Covered the heather with trailing wisps of cloud,
Left pools of rain in cup-shaped hollows of turf.
To-day again
There is peace everywhere and the worn stones
Patiently look out upon the mountain,
That to the south spreads out
Naked grey ridges on a bank of cloud.

To a place of stone I come and I return:
Granite to granite is my destiny,
The lips of rock pressed closely to my lips,
The strength of stone renewing all my own;
Whatever the seagull to the east is seeking,
Or the grey raincloud follows, I know not.
Drops without number falling have worn down
My heart to rock in this grim wilderness.

THE DAY THAT AUTUMN CAME

THE day that autumn came,
There was no change in mountain, sea, or cloud;
But the warm rain drew over,
Blotting out earth from sight.
He lashed the burnt brown soil
With his warm tropic streamers of grey cloud;
His smouldering coils of vapour
Drawn out of weedy green and purple seas.

All the night long the wind talked.
The stars, burnt-orange sparks,
Glimmered between the flying scuds
That sunset spun to gold.
Along three open moors
Hot drops fell on the bracken;
And puddles gleamed like scattered silver coins,
In the pale dawn.

The day that autumn came,
Grey cloud drew over earth;;
Warm haze was churned by tropic rain,
Hot winds blew from the south:
As if Brazilian oceans
Had suddenly risen to the sky
With sweeping crests, to spill on earth's
Grey coasts, their smouldering gold.

THE TOWER

I HAVE builded to my longing a great tower.
It shall pierce the chill blue sky with shafts of light,
Like a stripped swimmer darting
Into the deep, still ocean
From off a headland bordered in bright green.
I have reared up smooth stones to hold the light,
Have fitted them close together, stone to singing stone,
Have shaped diminishing pinnacles
That blossom into carven flame,
Alone amid the silence of the sky.

Crenellated battlements,
And latticed lancet windows,
Leap up above a multitude
Of brown autumnal hills:
Great elms stride out like sentinels
With golden plumes on lordly heads;
Beeches display great brazen shields,
Horse-chestnuts blare with molten notes of gold.

I have builded to my longing a great tower.
Like proud alto voices rising I have piled
Choruses of shouting stone
Poised on leaping arches underneath the sky.
Creepers, scarlet, blare like trumpets underneath;
Like an organ, echoing slow, a river glides;

And the brown autumnal hills
Crowded with ranked trees at rest,
Seem a congregation stilled at prayer.

Mists steal forth at evening
From the sunken river-meadows;
Wrap it 'round till it stands grey
In the twilight, and apart.
Over the glimmering surface
It stands, as blessing the dark waters,
That slip out easily
Into the sea of night.

I have builded to my longing a great tower.
Who will come and ring its bells?
Who will climb, and count aloft
Shower on shower of icy, splintered stars?
Who will mark the long-moon-dial swaying
Of its shadow on the cloister lawn?
Who will hear what in the silent dawn-hour
Shadowy drooping branches speak to it?

THE SWAN

UNDER a wall of bronze,
Where beeches dip and trail
Their branches in the water;
With red-tipped head and wings—
A beaked ship under sail—
There glides a single swan.

Under the autumn trees
He goes. The branches quiver,
Dance in the wraith-like water,
Which ripples beneath the sedge
With the slackening furrow that glides
In his wake when he is gone:
The beeches bow dark heads.

Into the windless dusk,
Where in mist great towers stand
Guarding a lonely strand,
That is bodiless and dim,
He speeds with easy stride;
And I would go beside,
Till the low brown hills divide
At last, for me and him.

SUNSET

THE sea uprose,
Wave after wave, nine waves behind each other;
The sky shut down
Like a giant's spread-out hand;
And, in between,
There was another country:—
Miles on miles of islands spread out naked ridges
In the windless desolation
Of a shadowless red ocean
Where no ship had ever been.

John Gould Fletcher

THE STAR

THERE was a star which watched upon my birth;
The great blue peaks were shrouded,
The sea was merged in haze, but, far apart,
There shone a single star.
And it burned steadily,
Watching through the night in silence;
It hung above the dusk
Whence I secretly came forth.

The peaks in the morning
Had thundered for creation;
The green sea had risen,
And swept clean the strand.
Now the wide earth was silent,
And silent the horizon,
When, between the ninth wave and the land,
I was brought forth.

There was a star which watched upon my coming.
I put forth my hand to seize it,
And, instantly, the sky
Broke, and was ribbed with light;
Lightning ran down the peaks and smote the narrow valleys,
Wandering blue flames flickered about the coastline,
The mountains danced in scarlet,
The earth roared with deep joy.

There is a single star that burns tonight far in the
lonely heavens;
The sea is hidden beneath it;
The mountains draw their capes of grey wool closely
about their shoulders;
There is no breath of wind.
Only the thought of one coming
Over the oceans in silence,
Wandering under a darker star
Than that which saw my birth.

EXIT

THUS would I have it:
So should it be for me,
The scene of my departure.
Cliffs ringed with scarlet,
And the sea pounding

The pale brown sand
Miles after miles;
And then, afar off,
White on the horizon,
One ship with sails full-set
Passing slowly and serenely,
Like a proud burst of music,
To fortunate islands.

John Gould Fletcher

THE HOME-COMING

Some day I shall go home at last,
With bluebells flinging their scent in many a sheltered valley,
Whitethorn awaking,
Fluting birds in the trees;
Some day I shall ride homewards
Through the rich flowering
Of May or early June,
Careless, serene.

Under the roar of heavy-leaved trees—
a song to set you crazy—
I shall go home to my narrow grave in the grass.

John Gould Fletcher

BLAKE

Blake saw
Angels in a London street;
God the Father on a hill,
Christ before a tavern door.
Blake saw
All these shapes, and more.

Blake knew
Other men saw not as he;
So he tried to give his sight
To that beggarman, the world.
"You are mad,"
Was all the blind world said.

Blake died
Singing songs of praise to God.
"They are not mine," he told his wife,
"I may praise them, they are not mine."
Then he died.
And the world called Blake divine.

John Gould Fletcher

ADVENT

I HAVE no more gold;
I spent it all on foolish songs.
Gold I cannot give to you.

Incense, too, I burned
To the great idols of this world;
I must come with empty hands.

Myrrh I lost
In that darker sepulchre
Where another Christ
Died for man in vain.—

I can only give myself,
I have nothing left but this.
Naked I wait, naked I fall
Into Your Hands, Your Hands.

John Gould Fletcher

THE ROAD

As one who walks in sleep, up a familiar lane
I went, my road to discover:
In my head was dark bewilderment and in my heart a pain;
The branches hung straight over.

At the summit the sky blazed with endless stars, refired
By the ebbing of the day;
The earth was darkly beautiful and I was very tired.
There was my road, and nothing more to say.

John Gould Fletcher

KINGDOMS

At the crossing of a street,
I know where earth and heaven meet;
And in the dewdrops on the grass,
I see where feet of angels pass.

Feet of angels wander by,
And in their midst I can descry
Human feet, pierced with nails;
I look upward. Light prevails.

And I have seen and yet will see
Fairies dancing merrily;
Faun, satyr, centaur, and, sitting down,
One in pale robe, and thorn-rimmed crown.

VACHEL LINDSAY

HAMLET

(Remembering how Walker Whiteside played Hamlet in Springfield so often in Chatterton's Old Opera House, thirty years ago.)

Horatio took me to the cliff
Upon the edge of things
And said: "Behold a cataract
Of the thrones of old dream kings."
And I saw the thrones falling
From the high stars to the deep:
Red thrones, green thrones,
To everlasting sleep.
I saw crowns falling
From the zenith to the pit:
Crowns of man's mighty moods
And whims of little wit.
And all the birds of Elsinore
Flew round Horatio's head
And crying, said:—
"Though all the crowns go down,
Hamlet, Hamlet, will never lose his crown."

Oh monarchs muddled, stabbed and lost,
Who have no more to say:
Gone with Caesar, with the Czar,
And the Kaiser on his way!
But now I see a student-prince
More real than all such kings,

Hamlet, home from Wittenberg,
And every bird sings:—
"Though all the crowns go down,
Hamlet, Hamlet, will never lose his crown."

Some of the dreams we saw dethroned
Were merely hopes of mine:—
One that a child might love me,
And give one leaf for a sign;
One dream I had in babyhood
That my rag-doll was alive;
One that I had in boyhood
That a sparrow, caged, would thrive.
One that I had for years and years
That my church held no disgrace.
One that I had but yesterday:—
Faith in Wisdom's face.

Oh royal crowns, falling fast
From the days of boy's delight
The frost-bright time when first I made
A giant snow-man white.
And the time of my first Christmas tree,
My first Thanksgiving Day,
My first loud Independence dawn
When the cannon blazed away. . . .
Oh, high fantastic hours
That died like dog and clown,
Into the awful pit
We saw their crowns go down,
But Hamlet, Hamlet, will never lose his crown.

As sages walk with sages
On the proud Socratic way,
Hamlet struts with players
Till the world's last day.
With seeming shameless strollers
He swaggers his black cloak,
With a prince's glittering eye
He spoils the townsmen's joke.
As I watch him and attend him
He compels them to give room,
And makes Fifth Street our battlement
Against the shades of doom.
With poetry, authority,
With every known pride
Hamlet stands with drawn sword,
His Gypsies at his side.

And all the gardens of the town
Are but Ophelia's flowers,
And all the shades of Elsinore
Fly round our Springfield towers;
And Hamlet kneels by all the hearts
That truly bleed or bloom,
As saints do stations of the cross
To Christ's white tomb.
And all the birds keep singing
To my heart bowed down:
" Hamlet, Hamlet, will never lose his crown."

I WANT TO GO WANDERING

I WANT to go wandering. Who shall declare
I will regret if I dare?

To the rich days of age—
To some mid-afternoon—
A wide fenceless prairie,
A lonely old tune,
Ant-hills and sunflowers,
And sunset too soon.

Behind the brown mountain
The sun will go down;
I shall climb, I shall climb,
To the sumptuous crown;
To the rocks of the summit,
And find some strange things:—
Some echo of echoes
When the thunder-wind sings;
Old Spanish necklaces,
Indian rings,
Or a feeble old eagle
With great, dragging wings.
He may leave me and soar;
But if he shall die,
I shall bury him deep
While the thunder-winds cry.
And there, as the last of my earth-nights go:
What is the thing I shall know?

With a feather cast off from his wings
I shall write, be it revel or psalm,
Or whisper of redwood, or cypress, or palm,—
The treasure of dream that he brings.

The soul of the eagle will call,
Whether he lives or he dies:—
The cliff and the prairie call,
The sage-brush and starlight sing,
And the songs of my far-away Sangamon call
From the plume of the bird of the Rockies,
And midnight's omnipotent wing—
The last of my earth-nights will ring
With cries from a far haunted river,
And all of my wandering,
Wandering,
Wandering,
Wandering. . . .

TO A GOLDEN HAIRED GIRL IN A LOUISIANA TOWN

You are a sunrise,
If a star should rise instead of the sun.
You are a moonrise,
If a star should come, in the place of the moon.
You are the Spring,
If a face should bloom,
Instead of an apple-bough.
You are my love
If your heart is as kind
As your young eyes now.

ONE OF THE FIRST FAMILIES OF CARMI

There's a house in Carmi haunted
By the ghosts of a thousand owls:
The wisdoms that died early
In the family of the Sprowls.
They lived a hundred years,
Would rob and sow and reap;
But never since the town was built
Thought a thought that's deep . . .
And so the owls keep hooting,
And nip them in their sleep.

THE LAND HORSE COMPARED TO THE SEA HORSE

The land-horse everybody rides
Until his eyes are dim.
But the sea horse—
Every wave *he* rides,
And nobody rides him!

THE ANGLO-SAXON LANGUAGE

THE Anglo-Saxon language,
Like the endless salty ocean,
Washes every shore of Earth
And leaps to meet the moon.
And every world-wide storm today
Upheaves the ravening breakers,
And every desperate ark and raft
Embarks there, late or soon.

Rouse, Oh shining minstrel-girl!
You walk not by a fishpond,
But skirt the waves of Saxon speech
Where far-brought sea-weeds shine.
Now make a singing boat so stout
That it will ride in splendor,
From evening land to morning star,
From Iceland to the line.

Where is that flaming maiden
Whose springtime heart will gather
Our ocean-storm of Saxon speech
In one great glory-tune?
A singing Eve in chaos
Who binds collosal kingdoms,
A conquering sweetheart on the sea
That leaps to meet the moon.

WRITING WILLS, AND SO FORTH

Old judge hoot-owl sits by his ink-well
Writing wills for the wealthy and swell.
He knows something *he* wont tell:
Three little house-flies drowned in his ink-well,
Three little scandals in a peanut-shell.

THE TRAVELLER

The moon's a devil jester
Who makes himself too free.
The rascal is not always
Where he appears to be.
Sometimes he is in my heart—
Sometimes he is in the sea:
Then tides are in my heart,
And tides are in the sea.

Oh traveller, abiding not
Where he pretends to be!

WHAT THE CLOWN SAID

"THE moon's a paper jumping hoop,"
Went on the circus clown,
"A film of gilded nonsense
For the games of Angel-town.

"If I could break those horses
That gallop through my sleep,
I'd reach that aggravating hoop
And make my finest leap.

"I climb upon their backs, and ride,
But always slip too soon . . .
And fall and wake, when just one mile
Remains to reach the moon."

AMY LOWELL

NIGHT CLOUDS

THE white mares of the moon rush along the sky
Beating their golden hoofs upon the glass Heavens;
The white mares of the moon are all standing on
their hind legs
Pawing at the green porcelain doors of the remote
Heavens.
Fly, Mares!
Strain your utmost,
Scatter the milky dust of stars,
Or the tiger sun will leap upon you and destroy you
With one lick of his vermilion tongue.

WIND AND SILVER

GREATLY shining,
The Autumn moon floats in the thin sky,
And the fish-ponds shake their backs and flash their
dragon scales
As she passes over them.

GRANADILLA

I CUT myself upon the thought of you
And yet I come back to it again and again.
A kind of fury makes me want to draw you out
From the dimness of the present
And set you sharply above me in a wheel of roses.
Then, going obviously to inhale their fragrance,
I touch the blade of you and cling upon it,
And only when the blood runs out across my fingers
Am I at all satisfied.

Amy Lowell

OLD SNOW

THE earth is iron,
The winds are bands of steel,
The snow is a pock-marked beggar-woman
Crouching at a street corner,
Whining an old misery over and over.
They say she was white once, and a virgin.
But who remembers it?
Seeing her lie indecently huddled upon an iron earth,
Cringing under the strokes of the steel-band wind.

MEETING-HOUSE HILL

I MUST be mad, or very tired,
When the curve of a blue bay beyond a railroad track
Is shrill and sweet to me like the sudden springing of a tune,
And the sight of a white church above thin trees in a city square
Amazes my eyes as though it were the Parthenon.
Clear, reticent, superbly final,
With the pillars of its portico refined to a cautious elegance,
It dominates the weak trees,
And the shot of its spire
Is cool and candid,
Rising into an unresisting sky.
Strange meeting-house
Pausing a moment upon a squalid hill-top.
I watch the spire sweeping the sky,
I am dizzy with the movement of the sky;
I might be watching a mast
With its royals set full
Straining before a two-reef breeze.
I might be sighting a tea-clipper,
Tacking into the blue bay,
Just back from Canton

With her hold full of green and blue porcelain
And a Chinese coolie leaning over the rail
Gazing at the white spire
With dull, sea-spent eyes.

ONCE JERICHO

WALKING in the woods one day,
I came across a great river of rye
Sweeping up between tall pine-trees.
The grey-green heads of the rye
Jostled and flaunted
And filled all the passage with a tossing
Of bright-bearded ears,
It was very fine,
Marching and bending
Under the smooth, wide undulation of the upper
branches of pines.

"Yi! Yi!" cried the little yellow cinquefoil.
"What is this bearded army which marches upon
us?"
And the loosestrife called out that somebody was
treading on its toes.
But the rye never heeded.
"Bread! Bread!" it shouted, and wagged its golden
beards.
"Bread conquering the forest."
I stood with the little cinquefoil
Crushed back against a bush of sheep's laurel.
"I am sorry if I crowd you," said I.
"But the rye is marching
And the green and yellow banners blind me,
Also the clamour of the great trumpets
Is confusing."

"But you are trampling me down," wailed the loose-
strife.
"Alas! Even so.
Yet do not blame me,
For I too have scarcely room to stand."

Then a gust of wind ran upon the tall rye,
And it flung up its glittering helmets and shouted
"Bread!" again and again,
And the hubbub of it rolled superbly under the
balancing pines.

"Three times the trumpets," thought I,
And I picked the cinquefoil.
"Why not on my writing-table," I said, caressing
its petals with my finger.
And that, I take it, is the end of the story.

NEW HEAVENS FOR OLD

I AM useless.
What I do is nothing,
What I think has no savour.
There is an almanac between the windows:
It is of the year when I was born.

My fellows call to me to join them,
They shout for me,
Passing the house in a great wind of vermilion banners.
They are fresh and fulminant,
They are indecent and strut with the thought of it,
They laugh, and curse, and brawl,
And cheer a holocaust of "Who comes firsts!" at the iron fronts of the houses at the two edges of the street.
Young men with naked hearts jeering between iron house-fronts,
Young men with naked bodies beneath their clothes
Passionately conscious of them,
Ready to strip off their clothes,
Ready to strip off their customs, their usual routine,
Clamouring for the rawness of life,
In love with appetite,
Proclaiming it as a creed,
Worshipping youth,
Worshipping themselves.

They call for women and the women come,
They bare the whiteness of their lusts to the dead
gaze of the old house-fronts,
They roar down the street like flame,
They explode upon the dead houses like new, sharp
fire.

But I——
I arrange three roses in a Chinese vase:
A pink one,
A red one,
A yellow one.
I fuss over their arrangement.
Then I sit in a South window
And sip pale wine with a touch of hemlock in it,
And think of the Winter nights,
And field-mice crossing and re-crossing
The spot which will be my grave.

FUNERAL SONG FOR THE INDIAN CHIEF BLACKBIRD, BURIED SITTING UPRIGHT ON A LIVE HORSE ON A BLUFF OVERLOOKING THE MISSOURI RIVER

He is dead,
Our Chief.
Aï! Aï! Aï! Aï!
Our Chief
On whom has fallen a sickness,
He, our Leader,
Who has grievously died.

At his feet we are gathered,
Warriors, his children,
We have cut our flesh
Before his body.
Our blood drips on the willow leaves,
The willows with which we have pierced our arms.
We beat the willow-sticks,
We mourn our Brother, our Father,
We chant slow songs
To the listening spirit of the great Chief
Blackbird.

Yesterday,
When the sky was red
And the sun falling through it,
They called to you,

Your ancestors,
From the middle of the sky;
From a cloud, circling above you,
They pronounced your name.

He is dead,
Our Leader.
Aï! Aï! Aï! Aï!
Our Chief, Blackbird.
Beat the willow-sticks,
Let our blood drop before him.

You have sung your death song,
To your friends you have sung it,
To the grasses of the prairie,
To the river,
Cutting the prairie
As the moon cuts the sky.

See, we lift you,
The blood of our willow-wounds drops upon you.
We dress you in your shirt of white buckskin,
We fasten your leggings of mountain-goat skin,
We lay upon your shoulders
Your robe of the skin of a young buffalo bull.
We clasp your necklace of grizzly bears' claws
About your neck.
We place upon your head
Your war-bonnet of eagle plumes.
All this you have commanded.

Aï! Aï! Aï! Aï!
Strike the willow-sticks.
You shall depart,
From among us.
It is time for you to depart,
You are going on a long journey.

Up to the tall cliff
We carry you.
Our blood drips upon the ground.
And your horse,
Your white horse,
Goes with you.
He follows you.
Softly we lead him
After your body,
After your not heavy body
Shrunken in death.

The hawk is flying
Halfway up the sky.
So will you be halfway above the earth.
On the high bluff
You are standing.
The ground trembles
As we place you upon it.

You are dead,
But you hear our songs.
You are dead,
But we lift you on your White Weasel Horse.

He trembles as the earth trembles.
His skin quivers
At the loose touch of your knees.
Aï! Aï! Aï! Aï!
Leader of the Warriors
To the spirit land you are going.
Our blood cries to you,
Dropping upon the willow leaves.

Who is this that rides the Wolf Trail at evening?
Blackbird,
Chief of his people.
His bow is in his hand,
Scarlet the heads of his arrows,
The feathers of his shield sweep the ground.
Lift him,
Lift him,
Lift the War Chief
To his light-legged horse.
We will stand,
We will see him,
We shall behold his body
Set on high on a high horse,
On his own horse,
His white horse of many battles.
We shall see him
As we desire.

You are bright as the sun among trees,
You are dazzling as the long sun running among the
prairie grasses,

You pierce our eyes as a thunder-cloud rising against
the wind.
Who shall be to us as he,
Our Chief?
Your white horse shivers and is still,
He will carry you safely over the Wolf Trail
To those who are talking about you
Calling to you to come.

Lay little sods of earth
About the feet of the white horse.
Gather those which contain the seeds
Of camass, and puccoon, and lupin.
Watch that the seeds of the looks-like-a-plume flower
Spread the earth we are laying against his sides,
So that, in the time when the ducks and geese shed
their feathers,
The black breasts may drop from the sky upon
them, singing,
As our blood drops on these sods.

Aï! Aï! Aï! Aï!
Proudly he sits his white horse,
His head-feathers make a noise in the wind.
Great Chief,
Father of people,
Facing the cleft hill,
Facing the long, moving river,
Waiting briefly for the edge of night,
Abiding the coming of the stars,

Poised to leap,
To strike the star-way with the mighty energy
Of your powerful horse,
To take the Wolf Trail with the shout of cunning,
To ride streaming over the great sky.
We watch you,
We exalt you,
We cheer you with our hunting-cries,
Our battle-songs,
To the beating of our willow-sticks you shall ride,
And he, your White Weasel Horse,
Shall bear you above the clouds
To the tepees beyond the star-which-never-moves.

When the waters are calm
And the fog rises,
Will you appear?
Then will come up out of the waters
Your brothers,
The Otters.
From beneath the high hill
Your voice shall echo forth.
Your voice shall be as metal
In the spaces of the sky,
Your war club shall resound through the sky.
Like your brothers,
The Eagles,
Your voice shall descend to us
Down the slopes of the wind.
You will go round the world,

You will go over and under the world,
You will come to the Place of Spirits.
Aï! Aï! Aï! Aï!
We are pitying ourselves
That he, our Father, is dead.
He is carried like thunder
Across the sky.
The trees are afraid of the wind,
So are we afraid of the whirlwind of our enemies
Without our Chief to lead us.
When the rain comes
On the wings of crows
In the Spring,
We shall fear even the voice of the owl,
Sitting alone in our lodges
Now that you are gone.

How many the count of your battles!
At night,
When the dogs were still,
Going softly
You would seek the villages of your enemies to destroy them.
You who, all night long,
Were standing up until daylight.
You fought as one who dances singing:
"Heh-yeh! Heh-yeh! Heh-yeh! Heh-yeh!
Death I bring!
I dance upon those I kill,
I scalp those I kill.

I laugh above those I kill,
Heh-yeh! Heh-yeh! Heh-yeh! Heh-yeh! "
Your enemies were not able to shoot,
Their bow-strings were wet
And the sinews stretched
And slipped off the ends of the bows.
Your arrows were red
As grasshoppers' wings
When they fly high in the sun.
Your enemies were ashamed before you
Since you cut off their heads
And tied their scalps to your bridle-rein.
Now you journey alone,
Journey along the Wolf Trail
Wearily among the little stars.

Aï! Aï! Aï! Aï!
It is time for you to depart,
You are going on a long journey.
You are going in your shoes.
You cannot travel,
Your feet are weary with many steps,
But your round-hoofed horse shall step for you,
He shall bear you over the trail of stars.
The deer walks alone,
Singing of his shining horns,
So shall you walk
Singing of the great deeds
You have done in this world.

Leader of the Warriors,
Where are you?
We, your children,
Sing a song of five sounds
To your departing spirit.
We sing a song of vermilion,
We stain our hands
And mark the palms of them in red
On the flanks of your horse.
We heap the sods about him,
We hold his head
And stuff his nostrils and ears with earth.
We cover your arms, your shoulders,
Your glittering face,
The feathers flying above your head.
The water-birds will alight upon your body,
We shall see your grave from below,
From the place where the snipe stand above their
shadows in the water.
Aï! Aï! Aï! Aï!
The Morning Star and the Young Morning Star
Are together in the sky above the prairie.
How far have you already gone from us?
Our blood drips slowly,
The wounds are closing,
It is time we pulled out the willow-sprays
And left this place
Before the rising of the sun.

JAMES OPPENHEIM

James Oppenheim

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE GOD

I

ONE does not at first know, *he* does not at first know,
That he wants to be God . . .
All things evidently are ready:
The races on their continents are cobwebbed to a
spider center at London . . .
Cable, wireless, steamship and locomotive,
Have brought the peoples of the earth into one
great auditorium . . .
One may stand at any point of the earth
And speak to the planet . . .

He was a college professor, a college president,
Governor of a small American State . . .
Politics are unclean in America;
By certain ways, still hidden from us,
By other ways, openly known,—like rising on a
powerful friend later discarded—
He captures the Democratic nomination and be-
comes President of the United States.

What shall we make of him?
He is suave, cool, imperturbable, detached;
He works in secret, with no man's counsel;
He has a keen mind that plays with principles;
Committees of Congressmen feel like small bad boys
before the limpid flow of his intellect;

He appears to be liberal, to be a lover of our Great
American Abstractions,
Equality, freedom, kindness, happiness, prosper-
ity . . .
He becomes the Little White Father in the White
House.

Earth is shaken by war-rumbles:
Aloof, pacific America is shocked and scandalized
by the primitive war-cries that warm the
cables:
Whole peoples are mobilized and swung into mighty
mechanical tides against each other;
Europe is aflame;
The spider in London by every gossamer thread
steadily draws the planet into the fire . . .
All races slaughter and are slain across the middle
of Europe . . .

But America remains untouched;
A hundred million strong our civilization stiffens
and strengthens our spokesman in Wash-
ington.
Gigantically backed, the sense of greatness is opened
in him,
There swims across him the wildest dream in his-
tory . . .
Mohammed dominated his massive millions with a
message,

Buddha ruled India with words,
Confucius corraled China with a book,
Christ's Cross is a second sky over the earth . . .
But none of these spoke to more than a segment of the world.
Earth itself now, with all peoples, looks for a Saviour,
And behold, there is a Saviour Nation, dedicated to peace,
A nation founded on liberty and equality,
A nation at peace in a world at war,
A nation with a mission, a Chosen People,
And the representative of that nation in the White House
Has arrived at the dramatic moment, the world his audience . . .

It is time again for the Word made flesh . . .
We are, possibly, in the dawn of those Thousand Years of Peace
When the Prince of Peace shall appear, not in a tiny sea-town and a local byway,
Walking unknown among a tribe of Israel,
But blazoned by the sky, at the Judgment Day, in all four corners of the earth.

It *is* Judgment Day: the cannon say so:
Doom's Day: the young men's blood so testify.
One man's words may be vivider than the battle, louder than the guns.

A pacifist Christ speaks out and bids the world
listen . . .

There are slips and pitfalls . . . there are
woundings of American honor, American
trade . . .
There is heat engendered in the Saviour Na-
tion . . .
There is heat and a little flame . . .
There is pressure on Washington . . .
The days are confused, the powers that rule Amer-
ica are imperative,
The tide turns: the Great Pacifist changes his rôle:
He suddenly appears more as a mad Mohammed
than a Christ,
He looses the floods of war, he amazes the world
with a new Crusade,
He shouts to America to arise and fight!

The aloof land is apathetic;
There is a dangerous moment of lull when no one
knows what may happen . . .
The Great Leader must flay his people into action,
He must turn and scourge and oppress his pacific
friends;
The mighty press thunders his messages;
The warlike rise up and carry his tidings;
America goes into camp, America flings to the
breeze a million starry banners;
America marches;

America crosses a bridge of ships to the bloody
mud of Flanders . . .

Did Europe cross over and make America?
America recrosses and saves Europe:
For this she was born, here is the first gigantic
realization of her mission,
Her first destined historic blow . . .

II

A man shall come out of the West . . .
The tide of the race has been to the West . . .
Out of a golden liberty-dream rode radiant Wash-
ington,
In a continent's sunrise Whitman chanted,
Born lowly, like Jesus, raised high, like Jesus, and
slain, like Jesus,
Abraham Lincoln walks beside Jesus in the heart
of mankind.

Nation that is a God among the numberless,
A God become a Man;
We weep that peace has come and we kneel down
and praise Wilson:
He turns our sacrifice into power,
From our deaths and agonies he builds the Eternal
Fraternity of the Earth:
We have fought the war that ends war:
A Christ of the common people stands as the su-
preme king of the Earth;

His word is magic . . .
For the power of America, power of gold and guns,
Power sucked from the wasted powers of the dying nations,
Is in the two hands of her indomitable President . . .

The last aloofness of the West is broken.
He himself sets sail for Europe, he himself comes,
And Kings and Premiers and Commanders may well tremble.
For the great tyrant, who, by a miracle, is another Lincoln,
Has only to speak the Word that shall save the world . . .

Men have dreamed of being God:
But this man need no longer dream:
It is actually so: the billions of the Earth wait on his word:
Destiny is in his pocket . . .

The nations are a whirl of plaudits: the cities are garlands of flowers:
The poor crowd for a sight of the American:
Streets and cities are named for him:
In the immense pathos of a hope that becomes a faith
The long-betrayed peoples, with their half-starved children and enfeebled women,
See once again their Saviour come . . .

He has spoken his Sermon on the Mount,—
Now, will he ride on an ass to Jerusalem,
And flay the money-changers in the Temple,
And, if need be, hang on the Cross?
He enters the Council Chambers . . . and what is this?
The doors shut behind him . . .
The time of the great silence has come . . .

III

The silence is long . . .
Wherever there is a Christ there is a Judas,
And wherever there is a Christ there are two thieves, one on either side of him . . .
But when was a Christ his own Judas,
And when his own thieves?

Politics in America are unclean:
How does one finally become a President of the United States?
Can one take the thirty pieces of silver with one hand
And take up the Cross with the other?

Storm in the rear!
Perhaps at home a prophet is without honor,
Or perhaps at home they know him too well . . .
There is dirty work in Paris and the discarded friends of the old days
Rise up and flay the false Christ . . .

And now boldly the Pharisees strike up a back-fire
in the Congress:
A divided nation sends doubt upon Europe . . .
Beware, Wilson, lest you be felled by a blow in the
back!

He hurries home . . . he thunders . . .
he returns to Paris . . .
Slowly the sorry story of base bargains and mutual
salesmanship
Corrupts the dream of the world.
America falls away from her President . . .
He is left naked; he has taken away from him the
strength of a hundred million;
Does anything remain? What is the greatness of
the naked man?

He returns, changed . . .
The balloon, bulged with omnipotence,
Pricked, collapses . . .
But he maintains the defiance of omnipotence,
The thundering Jehovah becomes a snarling Satan;
He sets out about the country, up and down,
Dazed, raging, sputtering, cursing . . .
In the damnation of finding his almightiness a pose,
A mask that no longer has magic,
He is only a defeated sensitive man, half-demented
with his ludicrous place in history,
And with the going down of the greatest dream of
all time,

And with the apparent losing of the sublime opportunity of the world . . .

He rails, he blasphemes in private, he strains his last strength,
And something breaks within him, and he is felled, the mortal,
Stricken—stricken by that Something . . .
That Something which never permits a man to be more than a man.

What is he then?
A child, dribbling at the mouth . . .
The most ironic tragedy in history.

IV

What shall we think of the man who wanted to be God?
He meant well, doubtless: there was a side to him that dreamed great dreams:
But American politics are unclean . . .

The great have a curious way of their own of coming to us,
They often start out from a log cabin, a butcher-shop, or a manger,
And they rise by devious new paths undiscovered before . . .

Obloquy dogs them most of their lives . . .
They themselves must be rejected and despised before they can be leaders of the despised and the rejected.

JOHNSON, NEGRO

I AM down in a mountain coal-town of West Virginia
Investigating a lynching.

The town smiles in the sunlight between the mountain and the river,
And by night it is gaudy with Main Street's movie shows, glaring shops and electric lights . . .
Crowds of roughs, miners and mountaineers, go seeking women and drink and shows.

It is by day, in the quiet sunlight, that I feel brooding over the town a horror and a guilt.
I feel it in the trembling sheriff . . .
"Did all I could," he says, "Daisy's thirteen: her pa a miner.
She keeps house for him.
It was ten in the morning, you know, and Daisy alone.
There come a knock. She opened. She says then a beast of a nigger took her by the throat and did it to her.
Then he got away.

"We had a line-up, fifteen niggers in a row;
And this fellow Johnson among 'em.
Daisy was took afore them. She pointed out Johnson and give a scream.

"*That* settled him . . .

"Oh, yes, I did what I could: took him over to
Gentryville, out of the county.
I'm not saying anything: one never does in these
parts:
But I know what I think."

I knew what he thought: a dozen painted the pic-
ture for me,
Until the dreamer in me became the negro Johnson:
I happen casually in a new town, a stranger,
I am arrested, a girl screams that I raped her,
I am hurried to jail . . .
This is a visitation from God, and I cower and moan
with fear of the supernatural.
Then I am terrified: the great snarling and howling
beast is at the gates:
There are shots, doors broken down, trample of
feet . . .
I shriek for mercy . . . O my mother! my
mother!
I am dragged on a rope down the streets,
Blood runs from me, blows are falling,
I am going to die . . .

Then, I am horribly mutilated,
And the rope is flung over a telegraph wire,
And I am pulled up . . .
At last, guns, merciful bullets . . .

Does this end it?
No: the body is there, the black naked, bleeding
body . . .
This is torn to pieces, and women and men carry
home fingers and toes and bits of bones for
relics.

What of the girl Daisy?
She is foolish, blushes, contradicts herself, isn't so
sure.
Her doctor *is* sure—that she never was assaulted.

This, too, is America—puritan America, moral
America, free America . . .
I go North less happy than I came.

James Oppenheim

NIGHT NOTE

A LITTLE moon was restless in Eternity
And shivering beneath the stars
Dropped in the hiding arms of the western hill.

Night's discord ceased:
The visible universe moved in an endless rhythm:
The wheel of the heavens turned to the pulse of a
cricket in the grass.

James Oppenheim

LILAC MAGIC

My heart is full of the loveliness of evening
That passes like a revery and a thought,
Like a meditation it broods in deepening gray,
In a noose of echoing silver the hills are caught.

Rich in its revelation of new soft green, the world
Sings in cricket and frog and belated bird . . .
I hardly know why there is sudden love in my heart
With what my eyes have seen and my ears have
heard.

Love, like a bell, the loveliness of evening
Rings in my heart with notes silver and true,
So that I go in the lilac-magic garden
Needing to give my heart to you.

James Oppenheim

A MAN NAMED MILLENER

A MAN named Millener sits up all of an April night
in Omaha
Trying to signal the planet Mars and get a reply . . .
It is the time when Mars is nearest Earth
And now the two coasting planets in the Old Black
Sea
May hail one another and break those two silences
We call Infinity and Eternity.

Millener has a giant wireless which sends waves so
long that sound goes silent
And the waves search through interstellar space
And wash the shores of planets . . .
His wireless is a mouth speaking to the stars . . .
It speaks: and becomes an ear . . .
An Earth-ear so great it cannot hear the flying wire-
less words of Europe and America
But is tuned only to the heavens. . . .

"We shall soon know," thinks Millener, "whether
there are others beside ourselves in the uni-
verse" . . .
So he sends the signals.

Then all night long he waits, watching and listen-
ing . . .
His ear is to the void, to the abyss. . . .

But there is no answer . . . the Silence remains
Silence.

James Oppenheim

IN A DREAM

In a dream, gentlemen,—
For it would have been treasonable to think this by myself—
I saw our venerable Statue of Liberty suddenly bowled over,
Sprawling in the bay. . . .

I was startled, I can assure you,
And glad to wake up and find it was only a dream.

James Oppenheim

THE WHITE RACE:
(*A Letter to Asia*)

It is true that we have put our feet on your necks,
And it is true that we have plundered your greatness . . .
The white man has been your master.

It is not true that we are therefore greater than you.
We bring you a handful of our great . . . say seven Greeks, one Englishman, two Americans, three Russians, two Germans, one Italian, one Frenchman. . . .
And we say here is great art, great philosophy, great religion.
Then against this handful you stack thousands of years of your great men,
A greater art, a greater philosophy, a greater religion.

What then is the white man's contribution?
We are the race of science . . .
We bring a science that is a colossal victory of intuition, work and intellect,
Vast knowledge that rules life through power of machinery,
And through this we rule you.

Philosophy, art, religion are overshadowed and driven into seclusion;

Smoke of our factories rises in China and India;
The telegraph poles run over the Himalayas;
We promulge and pour our distorted mechanical life
over the world.

Is it all loss?
The planet used to be spacious worlds remote each
from the other,
Boxed dreams, compartmented and isolated;
Now it is one world, and flash of the word works
instant miracle on the five continents.

The white man has wrought the framework of world-
union . . .
You could not withstand him, you of the splendid
subjectivity,
For the dream can be caught and caged by the
engines.

But the men of engines have tasted the poverty of
the spirit,
And are hungry for the glory of the East;
They hunger for manna that falls down from
heaven,
And for the song of free singing lips,
And for the spacious contemplations of the seer.

Great East, you are our sought-for and our de-
sired . . .

How can we come with our caustic realisms, our
eyes trained to the lens and the lever,
And yet partake of your special greatness?

Asians, you see our failure here,
And you prophesy our downfall,
And the rise of the new Asia. . . .

It is not so . . .
You do not know the emerging grandeur of our
science
Which itself now pierces with lucid rays into the
life of the spirit.

Of old, with you, and our medievals,
The inner life was gained by leaving the devil and
his ways
And dropping into the abyss of God . .
It was always: Which world will you have—for you
cannot have both?
Choose: Emperor or Galilean.

But now we seek the inner from the outside,—
With our deep psychology, our feet firmly on the
earth,
We enter the spaceless and timeless depths of the
spirit,
We make a mystic process, and emerge with the
great treasure
For use in a world of engines and men.

The long-dreamed synthesis is upon us,
An earth-life rich with the spirit,
The West powerful with the East.

Out of our terrible science, which has so distorted
and begrimed the beautiful Earth,
And enslaved peoples,
Till we thought beauty and dream and the Gods
were gone in the débris,
Out of this science re-arises, with eternal lineaments
and undying dawn,
Beauty, dream, Gods . . .
Asia re-arises up through the smokes of Europe.

Such, Asia, the white man's gift to you . . . in the
end . . .
You may destroy us, drive us from your continent,
overrun Europe;
But you must destroy us with our own weapons and
our own tools,
Our own knowledge;
You must destroy us by becoming as we are,
You must destroy us through our victory over you.

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

THE DARK HILLS

DARK hills at evening in the west,
Where sunset hovers like a sound
Of golden horns that sang to rest
Old bones of warriors under ground,
Far now from all the bannered ways
Where flash the legions of the sun,
You fade—as if the last of days
Were fading, and all wars were done.

CARL SANDBURG

CLEAN CURTAINS

NEW neighbors come to the corner house at Congress and Green streets.

The look of their clean white curtains was the same as the rim of a nun's bonnet.

One way was an oyster pail factory, one way they made candy, one way paper boxes, strawboard cartons.

The warehouse trucks shook the dust of the ways loose and the wheels whirled dust—there was dust of hoof and wagon wheel and rubber tire —dust of police and fire wagons—dust of the winds, that circled at midnights and noons listening to no prayers.

" O mother, I know the heart of you," I sang passing the rim of a nun's bonnet—O white curtains —and people clean as the prayers of Jesus here in the faded ramshackle at Congress and Green.

Dust and the thundering trucks won—the barrages of the street wheels and the lawless wind took their way—was it five weeks or six the little mother, the new neighbors, battled and then took away the white prayers in the windows?

BLUE ISLAND INTERSECTION

Six street ends come together here.
They feed people and wagons into the center.
In and out all day horses with thoughts of nose-bags,
Men with shovels, women with baskets and baby buggies.
Six ends of streets and no sleep for them all day.
The people and wagons come and go, out and in.
Triangles of banks and drug stores watch.
The policemen whistle, the trolley cars bump:
Wheels, wheels, feet, feet, all day.

In the false dawn when the chickens blink
And the east shakes a lazy baby toe at to-morrow,
And the east fixes a pink half-eye this way,
In the time when only one milk wagon crosses
These three streets, these six street ends,
It is the sleep time and they rest.
The triangle banks and drug stores rest.
The policeman is gone, his star and gun sleep.
The owl car blutters along in a sleep-walk.

PENCILS

PENCILS
telling where the wind comes from
open a story.

Pencils
telling where the wind goes
end a story.

These eager pencils
come to a stop
. . . only . . . when the stars high over
come to a stop.

Out of cabalistic to-morrows,
come cryptic babies calling life
a strong and a lovely thing.

I have seen neither these
nor the stars high over
come to a stop.

Neither these nor the sea horses
running with the clocks of the moon.

Nor even a shooting star
snatching a pencil of fire
writing a curve of gold and white.

Like you . . . I counted the shooting stars of a
winter night and my head was dizzy with all
of them calling one by one:

Look for us again.

NIGHT STUFF

LISTEN a while, the moon is a lovely woman, a lonely woman, lost in a silver dress, lost in a circus rider's silver dress.

Listen a while, the lake by night is a lonely woman, a lovely woman, circled with birches and pines mixing their green and white among stars shattered in spray clear nights.

I know the moon and the lake have twisted the roots under my heart the same as a lonely woman, a lovely woman, in a silver dress, in a circus rider's silver dress.

FOR CHRIST'S SAKE

Two Christs were at Golgotha.
One took the vinegar, another looked on.
One was on the cross, another in the mob.
One had the nails in his hands, another the stiff fingers holding a hammer driving nails.
There were many more Christs at Golgotha, many more thief pals, many many more in the mob howling, " Kill him, kill him! "
The Christ they killed, the Christ they didn't kill; these were the two at Golgotha.

* * * * *

Pity, pity, the bones of these broken ankles.
Pity, pity, the slimp of these broken wrists.
The mother's arms, anybody's mother, are strong to the last.
She holds him and counts the heart drips . . .
Drip, drip, this will be all.

The smell of the slums was on him.
Wrongs of the slums lit his eyes.
Songs of the slums wove in his voice.
The haters of the slums hated his slum heart.

The leaves of a mountain tree,
Leaves with a spinning star shook in them,
Rocks with a song of water, water, over them,

Hawks with an eye for death any time, any time,—
The smell and the sway of these were on his sleeves,
were in his nostrils, words.

One they killed.
One lives on;
Cross, thorns, head, against the moon.
Nails was their answer,
Nails,
Nails.

MAN, THE MAN-HUNTER

I saw Man, the man-hunter,
Hunting with a torch in one hand
And a kerosene can in the other,
Hunting with guns, ropes, shackles.

I listened
And the high cry rang,
The high cry of Man, the man-hunter:
We'll get you yet, you sbxyzch!

I listened later.
The high cry rang:
Kill him! kill him! the sbxyzch!

In the morning the sun saw
Two butts of something, a smoking rump,
And a warning in charred wood:
Well, we got him,
the sbxyzch.

Carl Sandburg

OSSAWATOMIE

I DON'T know how he came,
Shambling, dark, and strong.

He stood in the city and told men:
My people are fools, my people are young and strong, my people must learn, my people are terrible workers and fighters.
Always he kept on asking: Where did that blood come from?

They said: You for the fool killer,
you for the booby hatch
and a necktie party.

They hauled him into jail.
They sneered at him and spit on him.
And he wrecked their jails,
Singing, " God damn your jails."
And when he was most in jail,
Crummy among the crazy in the dark,
Then he was most of all out of jail,
Shambling, dark, and strong;
Always asking: Where did that blood come from?

They laid hands on him
And the fool killers had a laugh
And the necktie party was a go, by God.

They laid hands on him and he was a goner.
They hammered him to pieces and he stood up.
They buried him and he walked out of the grave, by God,
Asking again: Where did that blood come from?

CRIMSON CHANGES PEOPLE

Did I see a crucifix in your eyes
and nails and Roman soldiers
and a dusk Golgotha?

Did I see Mary, the changed woman,
washing the feet of all men,
clean as new grass
when the old grass burns?

Did I see moths in your eyes, lost moths,
with a flutter of wings that meant:
we can never come again.

Did I see No Man's Land in your eyes
and men with lost faces, lost loves,
and you among the stubs crying ?

Did I see you in the red death jazz of war
losing moths among lost faces,
speaking to the stubs who asked you
to speak of songs and God and dancing,
of bananas, northern lights or Jesus,
any hummingbird of thought whatever
flying away from the red death jazz of war?

Did I see your hand make a useless gesture
trying to say with a code of five fingers
something the tongue only stutters?
did I see a dusk Golgotha?

Carl Sandburg

LONG GUNS

THEN came, Oscar, the time of the guns.
And there was no land for a man, no land for a country,
Unless guns sprang up
And spoke their language.
The how of running the world was all in guns.

The law of a God keeping sea and land apart,
The law of a child sucking milk,
The law of stars held together,
They slept and worked in the heads of men
Making twenty mile guns, sixty mile guns,
Speaking their language
Of no land for a man, no land for a country
Unless . . . guns . . . unless . . . guns.

There was a child wanted the moon shot off the sky,
asking a long gun to get the moon,
to conquer the insults of the moon,
to conquer something, anything,
to put it over and win the day,
To show them the running of the world was all in guns.

There was a child wanted the moon shot off the sky.
They dreamed . . . in the time of the guns . . . of guns.

A. E. F.

THERE will be a rusty gun on the wall, sweetheart,
The rifle grooves curling with flakes of rust.
A spider will make a silver string nest in the darkest, warmest corner of it.
The trigger and the range-finder, they too will be rusty.
And no hands will polish the gun, and it will hang on the wall.
Forefingers and thumbs will point absently and casually toward it.
It will be spoken among half-forgotten, wished-to-be-forgotten things.
They will tell the spider: Go on, you're doing good work.

JACK LONDON AND O. HENRY

Both were jailbirds; no speechmakers at all;
speaking best with one foot on a brass rail;
a beer glass in the left hand and the right
hand employed for gestures.

And both were lights snuffed out . . . no
warning . . . no lingering:

Who knew the hearts of these boozefighters?

Carl Sandburg

HONKY TONK IN CLEVELAND, OHIO

It's a jazz affair, drum crashes and cornet razzes.
The trombone pony neighs and the tuba jackass snorts.
The banjo tickles and titters too awful.
The chippies talk about the funnies in the papers.
The cartoonists weep in their beer.
Ship-riveters talk with their feet
To the feet of floozies under the tables.
A quartet of white-hopes mourn with interspersed snickers:
"I got the blues.
I got the blues.
I got the blues."
And . . . as we said earlier:
The cartoonists weep in their beer.

CRAPSHOOTERS

SOMEBODY loses whenever somebody wins.
This was known to the Chaldeans long ago.
And more: somebody wins whenever somebody loses.
This too was in the savvy of the Chaldeans.

They take it heaven's hereafter is an eternity of crap
games where they try their wrists years and
years and no police come with a wagon; the
game goes on forever.
The spots on the dice are the music signs of the
songs of heaven here.
God is Luck: Luck is God: we are all bones the
High Thrower rolled: some are two spots,
some double sixes.

The myths are Phoebe, Little Joe, Big Dick.
Hope runs high with a: *Huh, seven—huh, come
seven.*
This too was in the savvy of the Chaldeans.

Carl Sandburg

INDIANA DUSK

THE red barns . . . in an Indiana dusk . . . at
Wawaka . . .
The lamplights touched off in the gray covers of the
farmhouses . . .
The hill ridges where trees count themselves against
the sky . . . in the Indiana dusk . . .
Barns, lamplights, ridges, out of this we make a
picture in a railroad smoker.
In the seat ahead four men play poker and call each
other tin-horn gamblers.
In the seat behind a soldier going to California tells
how French children asked him for cigaret
butts.
Cinders drum and swish on the windows of a sixty
mile train . . . and the wheels ahead saying:
Chicka-choo, chicka-choo, chicka-choo.

A leaf for a day, a late winter leaf:
Red barns in the Indiana dusk at Wawaka,
Lamplights touched off in farmhouse grays,
Hill ridge trees counting themselves against an early
night sky.

Carl Sandburg

SUMACH AND BIRDS

If you never came with a pigeon rainbow purple
Shining in the six o'clock September dusk:
If the red sumach on the autumn roads
Never danced on the flame of your eyelashes:
If the red-haws never burst in a million
Crimson fingertwists of your heartcrying:
If all this beauty of yours never crushed me
Then there are many flying acres of birds for me,
Many drumming gray wings going home I shall see,
Many crying voices riding the north wind.

Carl Sandburg

MIST FORMS

THE sheets of night-mist travel a long valley.
I know why you came at sundown in a scarf mist.

What was it we touched, asking nothing and asking all?
How many times can death come and pay back what we saw?
In the oath of the sod, the lips that swore,
In the oath of night mist, nothing and all,
A riddle is here no man tells, no woman.

HELGA

THE wishes on this child's mouth
came like snow on marsh cranberries;
the tamarack kept something for her;
the wind is ready to help her shoes;
the north has loved her; she will be
a grandmother feeding geese on frosty
mornings; she will understand
early snow on the cranberries
better and better then.

OMAHA

RED barns and red heifers spot the green grass
circles around Omaha—the farmers haul
tanks of cream and wagon loads of cheese.

Shale hogbacks across the river at Council Bluffs—
and shanties hang by an eyelash to the hill
slants back around Omaha.

A span of steel ties up the kin of Iowa and Nebraska
across the yellow, big-hoofed Missouri River.

Omaha, the roughneck, feeds armies,
Eats and swears from a dirty face.
Omaha works to get the world a breakfast.

Carl Sandburg

SILVER WIND

Do you know how the dream looms? how if summer
misses one of us, the two of us miss summer—
Summer when the lungs of the earth take a long
breath for the change to low contralto singing
mornings when the green corn leaves first
break through the black loam—
And another long breath for the silver soprano mel-
ody of the moon songs in the light nights
when the earth is lighter than a feather, the
iron mountains lighter than a goose down—

So I shall look for you in the light nights then, in
the laughter of slats of silver under a hill
hickory;
In the listening tops of the hickories, in the wind
motions of the hickory shingle leaves, in the
imitations of slow sea water on the shingle
silver in the wind—
I shall look for you.

APRONS OF SILENCE

MANY things I might have said today.
And I kept my mouth shut.
So many times I was asked
To come and say the same things
Everybody was saying, no end
To the yes-yes, yes-yes,
me-too, me-too.

The aprons of silence covered me.
A wire and hatch held my tongue.
I spit nails into an abyss and listened.
I shut off the gabble of Jones, Johnson, Smith,
All whose names take pages in the city directory.

I fixed up a padded cell and lugged it around.
I locked myself in and nobody knew it.
Only the keeper and the kept in the hoosegow
Knew it—on the streets, in the postoffice,
On the cars, into the railroad station
Where the caller was calling, " All a-board,
All a-board for . . . Blaa-blaa . . . Blaa-blaa,
Blaa-blaa . . . and all points northwest . . . all
a-board."
Here I took along my own hoosegow
And did business with my own thoughts.
Do you see? It must be the aprons of silence.

SARA TEASDALE

SEA SAND

I—MOONLIGHT

It will not hurt me when I am old—
A running tide where moonlight burned
Will not sting me like silver snakes;
The years will make me sad and cold,
It is the happy heart that breaks.

The heart asks more than life can give,
When that is learned, then all is learned;
The waves break fold on jewelled fold,
But beauty itself is fugitive,
It will not hurt me when I am old.

II—"LIKE BARLEY BENDING"

Like barley bending
In low fields by the sea,
Singing in hard wind
Ceaselessly;

Like barley bending
And rising again,
So would I, unbroken,
Rise from pain;

So would I softly,
Day long, night long,
Change my sorrow
Into song.

III—THE UNCHANGING

Sun-swept beaches with a light wind blowing
From the immense blue circle of the sea,
And the soft thunder where long waves whiten—
These were the same for Sappho as for me.

Two thousand years—much has gone by forever,
Change takes the gods and ships and speech of men—
But here on the beaches that time passes over
The heart aches now as then.

IV—WHEN DEATH IS OVER

If there is any life when death is over,
These tawny beaches will know much of me,
I shall come back, as constant and as changeful
As the unchanging, many-colored sea.

If life was small, if it has made me scornful,
Forgive me; I shall straighten like a flame
In the great calm of death, and if you want me
Stand on the sea-ward dunes and call my name.

IN SPRING: SANTA BARBARA

I HAVE been happy two weeks together,
  My love is coming home to me,
Gold and silver is the weather
  And smooth as lapis is the sea.

The earth has turned its brown to green
  After three nights of humming rain,
And in the valleys peck and preen
  Linnets with a scarlet stain.

High in the mountains all alone
  The wild swans whistle on the lakes,—
But I have been as still as stone;
  My heart sings only when it breaks.

THE LONG HILL

I MUST have passed the crest a while ago
  And now I am going down—
Strange to have crossed the crest and not to know,
  But the brambles were always catching the hem
    of my gown.

All the morning I thought how proud I should be
  To stand there straight as a queen,
Wrapped in the wind and the sun with the world
    under me—
  But the air was dull, there was little I could have
    seen.

It was nearly level along the beaten track
  And the brambles caught in my gown—
But it's no use now to think of turning back,
  The rest of the way will be only going down.

WATER LILIES

If you have forgotten water-lilies floating
On a dark lake among mountains in the afternoon shade,
If you have forgotten their wet, sleepy fragrance,
Then you can return and not be afraid.

But if you remember, then turn away forever
To the plains and the prairies where pools are far apart,
There you will not come at dusk on closing water lilies,
And the shadow of mountains will not fall on your heart.

STARS

Alone in the night
  On a dark hill
With pines around me
  Spicy and still;

A heaven full of stars
  Over my head,
White and topaz
  And misty red;

Myriads with beating
  Hearts of fire
That æons
  Cannot vex or tire;

Up the dome of heaven
  Like a great hill,
I watch them marching
  Stately and still,

And I know that I
  Am honored to be
Witness
  Of so much majesty.

"SINCE THERE IS NO ESCAPE"

SINCE there is no escape, since at the end
  My body will be utterly destroyed,
This hand I love as I have loved a friend,
  This body I tended, wept with and enjoyed;
Since there is no escape even for me
  Who love life with a love too sharp to bear:
The scent of orchards in the rain, the sea
  And hours alone too still and sure for prayer—
Since darkness waits for me, then all the more
Let me go down as waves sweep to the shore
  In pride; and let me sing with my last breath;
In these few hours of light I lift my head,
Life is my lover—I shall leave the dead
  If there is any way to baffle death.

THE TREE

Oh to be free of myself,
  With nothing left to remember—
To have my heart as bare
  As a tree in December;

Resting as a tree rests
  After its leaves are gone,
Waiting no more for a rain in the night
  Nor for the red of dawn;

But still, oh, so still
  While the winds come and go,
With no more fear of the hard frost
  Or the bright burden of snow;

And heedless, heedless
  If anyone pass and see
On the white page of the sky
  Its thin black tracery.

Sara Teasdale

PLACES

Places I love come back to me like music,
  Hush me and heal me when I am very tired;
I see the oak woods at Saxton's flaming
  In a flare of crimson by the frost newly fired;
And I am thirsty for the spring in the valley
  As for a kiss ungiven and long-desired.

I know a bright world of snowy hills at Boonton,
  A blue and white dazzling light on everything one sees
The ice-covered branches of the hemlocks sparkle
  Bending low and tinkling in the sharp thin breeze,
And iridescent crystals fall and crackle on the snow-crust
  With the winter sun drawing cold blue shadows from the trees.

Violet now, in veil on veil of evening
  The hills across from Cromwell grow dreamy and far;
A wood-thrush is singing soft as a viol
  In the heart of the hollow where the dark pools are;
The primrose has opened her pale yellow flowers
  And heaven is lighting star after star.

Places I love come back to me like music—
  Mid-ocean, midnight, the waves buzz drowsily;

In the ship's deep churning the eerie phosphorescence
Is like the souls of people who were drowned at sea,
And I can hear a man's voice speaking, hushed, insistent,
At midnight, in mid-ocean, hour on hour to me.

"WHAT DO I CARE?"

WHAT do I care, in the dreams and the languor of spring,
That my songs do not show me at all?
For they are a fragrance, and I am a flint and a fire,
I am an answer, they are only a call.

What do I care, for love will be over so soon,
Let my heart have its say and my mind stand idly by,
For my mind is proud and strong enough to be silent,
It is my heart that makes my songs, not I.

JEAN STARR UNTERMEYER

THREE DREAMS

I—THE SILVER YOKE

I GROW sick; I grow fainter and fainter
With picking out a footing
Among these tiny crags
That seemed made of lava
Not wholly cooled.

Fainter and frightened;
Apprehensive of evil.
What end threatens?
What doom—demeaned—degraded?

I see dwarfed men,
Bald and ignoble,
The color of worms;
They glide into byways
As a worm glides.

I follow; I am drawn after;
Caught in a sick spell.

Through me, who may be blighted?
I follow; I am drawn after. . . .

And in a tent
Of dusky velvet folds
I stand aghast.
Rage rends me with a purpose!

A maiden lies helpless,
A naked maiden whose hair swirls down from her
plaintive head
Like wilful golden rivers,
A maiden whose tender shoulders are held down
Under a yoke of beaten silver.
While leering, wormlike men
Feel of her flesh and bargain for her beauty
With low and horrible cries.

Anger splits me apart.
I am a cloud—a gale—
An avenging storm!
O worms, you are dead.
O maiden, I bring you a cleaner doom!

II—LOVE AND ART

I left the place where one had sung,
Misusing music
By placing herself before the song.
And anger at mankind
Battled with a reverence
That music, which is holy,
Wakes in the listening breast.

One of a murmuring crowd,
I walked down the long hill,
Hurt and yet eager;
Throbbing to offer myself
As servitor to all I loved.
And at the foot of the modern road
Stood an arch, vast and ancient.
And a voice in the shadow bade me look through it;
A finger, long, lean and grey pointed back.

I saw a landscape, mellow and magnificent,
Rising into the sky.
Rolling pastures, fit for the flocks of Lebanon;
Temples singing in the sun;
Purpled rivers, companioned by trees
That praised God by their symmetry.
And I thought to myself:
This is the Past.

But the voice in the shadow said:
"This is Art.
This is not for you."
And again the finger pointed. . . .

I fell into a great weeping.

Unwillingly I turned and going further
I saw chalked on a naked hoarding
A crude sum:
"Love *minus* Art = Wife."
And I followed, with withering resignation,
To a place where I knew you waited.

III—THE HOLY BAND

It was evening and the light was golden,
Golden on the furry pasture,
Golden where a russet bantam
Drew with straining curve his supper
From the gilded, gleaming udder
Of a cow in golden shadow.
I bade you look,
For I was half ashamed
Of this disarray of nature
In the golden flood of evening.

We walked together, you and I,
To where blue-robed and stately women
Moved to unsung chants
Toward a bidden destination.
And loaves and honey
Were laid out in holy whiteness
Along their assured path.
And you would have eaten,
But I bade you stay your hand,
Too blithe for piety.
And I was swept along
As by a command, a sweet hearkening
Easily cleaving the swaying band
Till I was leader—light and elated;
Balanced and propelled by a rhythm
Of myself and not of myself.

I moved as a ship, or a bird;
And yet each footstep left its image
Graven in the hallowed rock.
On . . . on . . . till the walls were mirrors
And I saw, not myself, but a greater self,
Re-formed, transfigured, made secure;
Firm . . . and free.
And at last we came to the end
And I stood before bronzed doors,
Waiting for confirmation.

The doors swung back with the hum of rolling major chords
And I saw a patriarch teaching a child,
A patriarch suffused in washes of light
From high, unending casements.
He lifted his capped head
And nodded it, ponderous and shapely.
He looked at me as at one who is known and expected—
And gave assent by a grave gesture.

Joy welled up in my heart,
Stronger than light,
Stronger than water,
As strong as song!
And I turned back
With tears as hallelujahs,
Back to the elder women.

A SOLDIER LISTENS
(*To S. S.*)

WHAT was it came to distress you?
Who from the restless dead?
As you sat in the slanting shadows
With a heavy head.

The music pressed in among us,
Almost too much—
You quivered and seemed to be startled
By a known touch.

Even when healing cadences
Reached out to you,
Your face looked broken in pieces,
Shot through and through.

As you sat in the slanting shadows
With a heavy head,
What was it came to distress you?
Who from the clamoring dead?

ON TEMPLES

Tell me:
Why do men make crypts of stone
To snare a living God?
Has he not made him for his own
A temple far more beautiful,
Whose ceiling is no static blue,
And the walls of which shine with no ephemeral gilt;
But are fashioned of quivering green
That fades only to bloom again,
Even as the word of the Lord.

And tell me:
Do these bought singers reach his favor?
And is his ear arrested by these paid praises?
Or are they not as hired mourners
Whose wailings measure the purse, not the pulse of the bereaved.

Is there no real singer among us?
Is there no one who must celebrate our hungers and our feastings
And make a mellow music for God?

And is there no dancer, who with leaping joy
and drooping sorrow
Will show our state to the eyes of our Father?
And are there not many—yea, millions —
Who will make living works
That will invite the Almighty
So that he will come down and dwell in them.

GLIMPSE IN AUTUMN

LADIES at a ball
  Are not so fine as these
  Richly brocaded trees
That decorate the fall.

They stand against a wall
  Of crisp October sky,
  Their plumèd heads held high
Like ladies at a ball.

DURING DARKNESS

TAKE me under thy wing, O Death,
I am tired, I am cold.
Take me under thy wing, O great, impartial bird;
Take me, carry me hence
And let me sleep.
For the soil that was once so sweet is sour with rotting dead;
The air is acrid with battle fumes;
And even the sky is obscured by the cannon's smoke.
Beauty and Peace—where are they?
They have gone, and to what avail?
The mountains stand where the mountains stood,
And the polluted seas boil in the selfsame basin,
Unconcerned.
The beast in man is again on the trail,
Swinging his arms and sniffing the air for blood.
And what was gentle,
What bore fruit with patient pain, is gone.

Take me under thy wing,
O Death.

LOUIS UNTERMEYER

BOY AND TADPOLES

He brought them from the muddy creek
  And clapped them in this glassy sphere;
He studies them but does not speak
  While they flash by and disappear.
They curve and veer, they swerve and roll,
  A world of brown and yellow gleams—
Six tadpoles in a green glass bowl . . .
  He watches them—and dreams:

Black water and a burnished moon.
What ship is that in the dark lagoon?
Over an oily sea she slips
And drips a phosphorescent spray.
One hears the rattle of dice at play
The cheers and clatter of drunken quips
And thick lips roaring a ribald tune.
Her sides are gashed and pitted and scarred
And marred with slashes of brilliant rust.
Is it blood that glows like an evil crust?
Or mud that has grown like a stone fixed hard
On this ill-starred vessel of loot and lust?

What's that? That spot on the faint horizon?
They glue their eyes on the tossing dot.
It crosses the moon like a curious blot
While furious cries of " Blast 'em! " and " Pizen! "
Reveal that the missing prize has been sought for

And soon will be caught, for the little speck,
Towering in size, turns round the neck
Of forbidden land with its hidden ship;
Pauses, inquires—and fires a shot!
Crash! There's the clash of cutlass and sword;
Gun-barrels flash on the swarming deck;
The storming party surges aboard.
A hot wind scourges, the bullets whip
The figures that stumble in blood which is poured
In a tumbling flood through the crumbling night
And stains the white dawn with a hideous light.

Ripples of dappled crimson and brown
Show where the sloops have grappled and split.
Here's where *The Royal Ben* went down;
And there, ten yards to the right of it,
The Black Avenger, full to the guards,
Riding the track of a lone disgrace,
Sank in her own dank hiding-place.
Nothing's afloat but the broken shards,
A boat and an oaken beam or two. . . .
What of the captain? What of the crew?
Go, ask the sharks in the dark and bloody
Depths where the clean green tides turn muddy.
Ask of those bloated bellies that veer
In the ruddy welter that shelters them all.
Ask, as they plash their watery wall,
Before they flash and disappear,
And dwindle . . . and shrink . . . and sink to their
hole . . .

And change . . . to . . . little things . . . with
gleams . . .
Describing rings as they curve . . . and roll . . .
Six tadpoles in a green glass bowl—
He watches them and dreams:

A sea of lapis lazuli,
With casual sunbeams lacing gold
On light skiffs facing the west, on old
Bright cliffs that rise from some mythical story,
On clouds that rest on the promontory,
And waves that reach white arms to the beach.
Sparkle and shimmer . . . glimmer and shine . . .
The sea grows dimmer . . . and dark . . . as wine.
Who is that swimmer, untiring, returning,
Churning the brine?
Is it Leander . . . that daring boy?
Those skiffs . . . Agamemnon's? That cliff . . .
is it Troy?
A glow of sea-faring, home-yearning faces
Flares like a torch through these burning spaces.
The sea is turning a livelier hue—
Pools of the sun are gold oases
On a sweeping plain of purple and blue.
And—leap and curve—and swerve and flicker—
And dip and swirl with a flip of the tail,
The dolphins, coming faster, thicker,
Dive through the alabaster foam.
Under a sapphire dome they sail
And scale the breakers that drive them home.

But some more stately and corpulent fishes
Move sedately, as though suspicious
Of these young friskers; their weedy whiskers
Lie in a wry disapprobation
Of such spry methods of navigation.
They wag their heads in a solemn gesture—
And still the column moves, a nation
Of dapper fins and swishing flappers.

But what is advancing in radiant vesture?
A mock sun dancing, it floats along!
Notes of a song; low, gradient cries
Rise from the image—or is it a god
Come to revisit the haunts of his youth!
Fable or truth—can the boy trust his eyes?
There, with bright hair, like a tossing fire
Crossing the sunset, a shape with a lyre
Flashes and glows . . . where no being has trod!
He guides his strange courser with never a rein;
And spurring the jewelled sides of a slender
Dolphin that glides on this velvet lane,
Apollo rides in his antique splendor!

The sea has become a dazzling rout:—
Sea-urchins hum and the great tides shout.
Star-fish sing in their shining courses.
Sea-horses whinny and gild their manes.
Thrilled by these strains to its finny sources,
Ocean strikes off its ancient chains;
And, from its rivers and hurricanes,

Strains and delivers its cherished dead.
Perished adventurers, sailors and mariners,
Buried for centuries: Norsemen, Phœnician,
Danish and Spanish and Roman and Grecian,
Clean-shaven natives and thick-bearded foreigners—
Up from the graves with a mountainous tread,
Roll out the staves of their chanteys and calls.
Evening falls. . . . But the revel continues.
An ivory moon looks down and whitens
The backs of Tritons and bathes their sinews.
Here in this amorous, glamorous weather,
Mermaids and pirates whisper together. . . .

And, during it all, the dolphins are leaping,
Sweeping their silver-tipped tails in a sway
Of rhythms so gay that they play without sleeping.
Dancing and dipping; glancing and flipping
Sparks from the arcs they describe in the spray.
Mirth that is bounded by nothing but clear
Earth, sea and sky in a high, hollow sphere;
Spirit-surrounded, with buoyant elation,
They weave, these green shuttles, a subtle persuasion,
A magic, half-Asian, that bears him away.
A mingling of patterns and echoes and themes
That swim through his fancy like runaway streams;
A dim, shifting blur of disaster and drifting . . .
Of blood flowing faster, of livelier measures . . .
Of treasures . . . and Time . . . and secret veils
lifting . . .
And heroes . . . and tadpoles . . . and dreams.

SHIN-LEAF
(*For R. F.*)

WHAT drew me first to them was the surprise
  Of finding so much brazen loveliness
  In drab New England woods. I tried to guess
The message hidden in their frank disguise.

I looked of course for maxims; but they would
  Not speak to me of beauty or its cause.
  Sharing their silence with pipsissewas,
Stiff, in their lilied dignity, they stood.

I think I loved them all the more for this,
  And for the plain suggestion of their use
  As country plasters on a cut or bruise,
Than for a weightier analysis.

Magic without a meaning! And a floral
  Tribute to nothing greater than themselves,
  Or the few rocks that laid the moss in shelves . . .
I left the place without a single moral.

THE NEW ADAM

HER body is that glorious gate
  Opening on fresh and surging skies,
The door of flesh that holds a late
  And larger Paradise.

Through this I plunge with hungry haste
  Down the old garden, stock and root.
Nothing is barred; I touch and taste
  Its unforbidden fruit.

The amorous jungle spreads its feasts,
  The lion fawns about my knee;
A new strength dawns; and all the beasts
  Are risen and contained in me.

Soft thunders gather, as the glen
  Unfolds the tree from which she shakes
Her heart for me—and once again
  The wave of lightning breaks. . . .

Oh shut the gate! Let me be driven
  Down the dark byways of the past.
What right have I in such a heaven
  To whom earth clings so fast!

FREE

And suddenly the touch of flesh
  Is hateful as those hungry curves,
And every point of contact is a fresh
  Agony to these whipped and exhausted nerves.

Warm hollows, will you never let
  Me go till you have buried all my will?
Oh, to be free of the body, to lie and forget
  The use of lips and hands, to lie and be still.

I want a bed with room to spare,
  Where nothing breathes and sleep is sure;
There lust shall have a deeper sense, for there
  The worm shall be my only paramour.

Slowly the worm shall have his fill
  (As I have had) of flesh and frequency,
Until the body falls away, until
  Passion devours me—and sets me free.

Louis Untermeyer

INTERCESSION

Night,
Take down the moon's keen sickle
And reap a bright
Destruction on these light and fickle
Souls that dance with every wind.
Sweep left and right
Until these overplanted fields are thinned.

But spare,
In your intolerant wrath,
One flower struggling where the path
Is overgrown with weeds and grass.
The rain has barely touched her thirst.
Let her drink sunlight first.
Night, when you see her waiting there,
Pass.

A MARRIAGE

I TELL you it is over and I mean it.
  You have been tugging at my joy too long.
The coming of the end—you must have seen it—
  Finds us still struggling, stubborn but not strong.

You light your darkness on me, you rekindle
  Things long burnt out upon my warmth in vain.
Your flicker fails; the gusty fires dwindle.
  And though you use me up, what do you gain?

If you could only drink some buoyance from me,
  Or draw me up, like blood, to be transfused;
But all your heavy broodings overcome me,
  And leave us both bewildered and misused.

Well, let us try once more this magnifier
  Of pride and passions. Let it burn us through.
Come, take of me whatever you require;
  I shall not tell you what I steal from you.

Thus, feeding but not fed, we waste each other,
  And war with weapons never understood.
And win, with each new ending, one another;
  And take up arms again . . . and find it good.

WORDS FOR A JIG
(*To be danced on the grave of an enemy*)

THUS I pay the visit
  Promised years ago.
Tell me, loyal friend, how is it
  There below?

Do these weeds and mullein
  Choke each angry mood,
Or increase your hard and sullen
  Torpitude?

You who sought distractions
  Howsoever base,
Have you learned to love inaction's
  Slower pace?

Here, at least, you've found that
  You belong to earth;
Dying on the careless ground that
  Gave you birth.

Do not let it fret you;
  Things are not so drear.
Though the heartless world forget you,
  I am here!

I have not forgotten
How you loved the stir;
Black at heart and doubly rotten
Though you are.

So I take my fiddle,
And I roar a stave;
Dancing gaily on the middle
Of your grave.

And I tramp the new wood,
And I shout halloo—
All the lively things that you would
Like to do.

Such regard must cheer you
In your misery,
Although I can scarcely hear you
Thanking me.

But I ask no hands in
Thanks or loud applause;
I am glad to sing and dance in
Such a cause.

Thus I pay the visit
Promised years ago . . .
Tell me, loyal friend, how is it
There below?

"ON THE FIELD OF HONOR"

(*For T. M. Kettle. Died at Ginchy, 1916.*)

You always were for sides, your hand
  Rose to the shock of partisan blows.
And now, at ease in No Man's land,
  You sprawl between your friends and foes.
The carved mouth and the challenging eye,
  Your loud scorn and your quiet faith—
Who would believe that *you* would lie
  In the anonymous ranks of death!

I wonder how you take your rest,
  Whose restless vigor tossed and burned;
And do you find earth's stony breast
  Warmer than those from which you turned?
Are you content with this, the goal
  Of all your purposes and pains;
Knowing the iron in your soul
  Will not corrode, for all the rains?

An end to questions now; you are
  Their silent answer on this red
Terrain where every flickering star
  Is a last candle by your bed.
The guns have gone, and you are part
  Of the clean winds that smooth your brow.
O vigilant mind, O tireless heart,
  Try sleeping now.

THE GARLAND FOR DEBS

HERE, in our easy chairs, we sit and choose
  Words for a garland woven of our praise;
  The fluent metaphor, the striking phrase,
Inserted gracefully, are what we use. . . .
And there he stands, and silently reviews
  The bitter-scented nights, the flowerless days,
  Thinking of all the many little ways
A man may win all that he seems to lose.

And then—this verbal wreath . . . perfumed . . .
      precise.
  Pathetic incongruity. . . . It adorns
A head too scarred and knotted to be nice.
  This floral tribute prettifies the scorns
And outrage. Something plainer should suffice:—
  Some simple, patriotic crown of thorns.

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